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ABSTRACT

Many studies of dropouts have examined race, gender, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status as factors predisposing students to drop out of school. A study was conducted to examine the school-related factors influencing high school students' decision to drop out, as well as the attitudes of high school dropouts toward public education today. Fifty high school dropouts enrolled in Adult Basic Education and General Educational Development test preparation classes were surveyed using questions identical or similar to questions asked in the 16th Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (1984) and questions about their reasons for dropping out and attitudes toward teachers. The results revealed that students who had negative feelings toward school tended to drop out for school-related reasons and to have problems with academic success/failure and relationships with teachers and peers. Students with neutral attitudes toward school also tended to drop out for school-related reasons such as boredom or difficulty keeping up with schoolwork. Students with positive attitudes toward school and teachers were least likely to have dropped out for school-related reasons. (References, data tables, and the survey instrument are included.) (NB)

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VOICES OF EXILES: THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM THE DROPOUT'S PERSPECTIVE

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CG 019464

A research project

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Education Degree in Special Education

MANSFIELD UNIVERSITY
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Many studies of the dropout phenomenon have concentrated on race, gender, ethnic background and socioeconomic status as factors predisposing students to drop out of the public schools. In this study, a survey is conducted to examine the school-related factors influencing high school students' decisions to drop out, as well as the attitudes of high school dropouts toward public education today.

Problem Statement

Why did public school dropouts leave school and what are their attitudes toward education today?

Anticipated Value of the Research

Studies indicate that 25% of United States adolescents do not graduate from high school (Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Minnesota State Department of Education, 1981; Natriello et al., 1985; Newmann, 1981; Solórzano, 1986). A better understanding of the dropout phenomenon will provide insight into program and service needs of dropout-prone students. Identification of the school-related causes of student attrition can serve as a focal point for educators who seek to lessen the dropout rate.

Review of Literature

Fine (1985) stated that dropouts are more likely "to be in prison, to have multiple pregnancies and children, to be on welfare, unemployed, or in dead-end jobs than high school graduates." The costs of dropping out might be counted in lost tax revenue, welfare and unemployment costs and crime and crime prevention. But the greatest costs are in loss of human potential.

Former Secretary of Education, T.H. Bell (1984), reported that approximately 27 million Americans are functionally illiterate and are not able to "read, comprehend, write or compute at a level which enables them to function in a complex world." If we are truly "A Nation at Risk" and if education is of central importance to our national well-being, the underlying causes of the dropout phenomenon need to be examined.

A major impediment to dropout prevention is that educators are "justly apprehensive about adding more public criticism in an area of weak and uncertain solutions applied to a group of young people whom many believe to be undeserving (Mann, 1985b)." Newmann addressed the reluctance of the general public to recognize alienation as a major cause of problems in modern schools: "Despite controversy on the academic effectiveness of schooling . . . general public confidence in the public schools remains relatively high."

Voices of exiles. As Fine and Rosenberg (1983) observed:

> **Critical perspectives on social institutions are often best obtained from exiles, that is persons who leave those institutions. This is perhaps why exiles' views are frequently disparaged as deviant and in some cases are conspicuously silenced. High school dropouts in the United States fit this pattern very well. Many of these adolescent men and women have been pushed out of school; some have opted out; all are regarded as failures. While many are critics of American education, their voices are rarely heard.**

A study of secondary school dropouts by the Minnesota State Department of Education (1981) revealed that 69% of the dropout population sampled had average or above average IQs. Many dropouts are clearly capable of academic achievement and their critiques of the educational system deserve to be heard. Again quoting Fine and Rosenberg:

> **Empirical data demonstrate that many adolescents who leave school are academically and intellectually above-average students, keenly aware of the contradictions between their academic learning and lived experiences, critical of the meritocratic ideology promoted in their schools, and cognizant of race/class/gender discrimination both in school and in the labor force.**

The reasons for dropping out of school are often complex and frequently involve a combination of many factors. According to Thornburg (1975), "There is limited research available in which the assessment of attitudes toward school of potential dropouts has been done. One cannot help but feel, however that such attitudes are reflected in some of the reasons cited . . . for leaving."

In a report by Kumar and Bergstrand (1979) of interviews with 976 high school non-completers in Wisconsin, 43% did not like school, 24% reported that they experienced difficulties in school, 23% felt that their courses were not useful, and 17%, that their special needs were not met.

A similar study (Peng & Takai, 1983) of 2,289 high school dropouts, revealed that the most frequently cited reason for males to drop out of school was poor grades (36%), followed by dislike of school (35%). The most frequent reasons cited by females were "to get married" (31%), dislike of school (31%) and poor grades (30%). According to a survey of 162 former dropouts from Phoenix, Arizona (Norris, 1980), the major reason for dropping out is "that students are increasingly 'turned off' by their schools teachers, and programs."

Basic skills competency levels. In a 1985 study, Zigmond and Thornton found a significantly higher dropout rate and significantly lower basic skills competency levels among LD than non-LD youth. Several studies have found students with poor reading ability to be at risk for dropping out (Self, 1985; Cage, 1984; Schrieber, 1979; Hess, 1985). Mayhood (cited in Self, 1985) indicated that "poor reading ability leads to school failure, and repeated failures lead to feelings of being a 'born loser', which in turn, results in either aggressiveness or withdrawal. When success in school no longer seems likely, removing oneself from the setting in which failure occurs seems reasonable, almost compelling."

The average student withdrawing from the Logan County, Kentucky schools in 1976-77 and 1977-78 (Abram & Cobb, 1981) was male, 16 years of age, had been retained at some time, and in the eighth grade performed at the 3.5 stanine level in reading and the 4.4 stanine level in math. The three most frequent reasons respondents gave for leaving school were to work full time, that school was not teaching what they wanted to learn, and that they had poor grades and didn't think they would graduate.

In interviews with 95 dropouts from the Austin, Texas school district, (1982) the most frequently listed primary reasons for withdrawal were academic concerns (30%) including "inability to maintain academic pace, unable to read and write at grade level, failing courses." 16% of the respondents were bored or dissatisfied with course content and had conflicts with teachers and administrators. In interviews with over 200 Arkansas dropouts, Snowden and Peel (1985) found that over 70% had bad grades, 59% had been suspended or expelled and 49% had failed a grade or were held back.

Effects of school reform movement. Several authors have argued that the current school reform movement, which emphasizes "excellence" in education, will tend to push out students who are already having trouble in school - with longer school days and school years, more homework, and more required academic courses geared toward a very narrow population of college bound students. (Natriello et al., 1985; Fine, 1985; Mann, 1985a; Kozol, 1985; Solórzana, 1985).

Referring to the ruling by the Florida State Board of Education (1983) to deny diplomas to students who fail standardized tests, Kozol stated that students still in junior high are dropping out because they know they will fail. "They will never take the SATs. National scores for those who do will

consequently improve. The public will applaud the seeming gains in excellence achieved by more efficient methods of exclusion. . . . The talk is all of 'standards' --not solutions." As Natriello et al. (1985) concurred, this tends to make policy makers feel that the most successful reforms are those which rid the schools of students with performance problems.

Similarly, Fine (1985) stated that "There persists a pervasive commitment to ridding the school of 'difficult students,' as soon as they can be released legally." She discussed the practice of *actively* discharging students when they are legally old enough because of a history of "chronic cutting, mouthing off, wearing a coat in class one time too many, or being in the wrong place at the wrong time." Chronic truants are *passively* discharged; they receive a letter stating that they will be discharged unless they and a parent/guardian come to the school. They are rarely, if ever, informed of a their right to a free public education through the age of 21.

School climate. According to Raywid (1983), there is a growing body of evidence that school climate is critically important to students' success. This is described as "the style and quality of school life, patterns of student and teacher behavior, how students are treated as a group, the management of the group of students with the school, and the care and maintenance of building and grounds."

Similarly, Newmann (1981) suggested that student alienation could be reduced, not by eliminating stress or effort; but rather, by "arranging conditions so that people expend energy in ways that enhance engagement with work, people, and physical surroundings."

Fine (1985) observed that "Classrooms are more often than not organized around control . . . than around conversation: more often around the authority of the teacher than the autonomy and creativity of the students." She feels

that this is more apt to happen when teachers feel that they don't have any input into school policies and practices and suggests that:

> **Empowered teachers may be more likely to view students holistically, optimistically, and compassionately, whereas disempowered teachers may be more likely to disparage, discredit, and further disempower their students. Teachers who feel they don't have a voice in a school and are not involved in decision making, planning, and policy setting may also be more likely to enforce high control, heavy lecture, teacher-dependent, and passive student classes.**

Schreiber (1979) found that dropouts tend to consider themselves poorly treated or unesteemed by teachers and other pupils and feel that teachers are not interested in them or their problems. "Perhaps, more often than not, they are right in their perceptions. Too often they permit these perceptions to downgrade an already deflated self-image, contributing to a vicious cycle of further failure, nonparticipation, and social withdrawal."

In-depth (1 1/2 to 2 hour) interviews with 229 school staff, alternative school students and dropouts in New York City (Hunt and Woods, 1979) returned the following indictment:

> **"All groups of students expressed strong dissatisfaction with teachers and other staff members. They described them as not caring about them as people, unwilling to help the students with problems, unable to communicate effectively with young people, unable to offer clear explanations in class, prone to humiliating students, and particularly insensitive to students with problems... All groups of students felt that the curriculum offered in schools does not meet their needs."**

High school dropouts from "Middletown" (Muncie, Indiana) have been the subjects of studies since 1934. In the most recent study, Hewitt and Johnson (1979) found an "increase in the effect that one's personal relationship with the school is having on one's educational career" and that economic factors are no longer the primary reason for dropping out. Of the 54 dropouts interviewed, 56% listed "didn't like school" as their primary reason for withdrawal.

Of 76 Canadian dropouts surveyed (Timmons & Wolsk,1980), 80% didn't like school and 85% felt that the school rarely considered students' ideas and feelings when deciding what they wanted students to do. However, 68% stated that the amount of effort they put into a course depended on teacher expectations. Although 54% said that what they wanted out of school was to "learn the basics," 68% felt that they were getting very little from school and 45% reported feelings of aggravation, frustration and rejection.

Kaplan and Luck (1977) hypothesized that dropping out was the symptom, but not the cause of educational failure. "It is the final manifestation of a chronic problem which often has roots much earlier in the dropout's educational career."

The Gallup Polls. The National Commission on Excellence in Education refers specifically to the Gallup poll in its 1983 report. One of the founders of the Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools, Edward A. Brainard (quoted in Elam, 1983) stated that the original purpose of the poll was to obtain information that would help public school educators better serve their students and their communities. Elam concluded that "a great many answers to poll questions are based not on a fund of sound knowledge but chiefly on generalized, non-specific attitudes. In the main, these attitudes were formed during some of the most impressionable years of life, when the respondents were themselves attending school."

In summary, all of the literature reviewed indicated that school-related reasons were a major factor in decisions of high school students to drop out of school. There was a consensus that these individuals tended to have difficulty with student/school personnel relationships, problems with academic success/failure, and concerns about curriculum relevance.

In this study 50 high school dropouts are surveyed to examine their attitudes toward public education using questions identical or similar to questions asked in the 16th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (1984) as well as questions intended to find out why these individuals dropped out and how they felt about their teachers. Unlike the Gallup sample, which is described as a "modified probability sample of the United States" (Gallup, 1984), all subjects in this study were high school dropouts who were Pennsylvania residents. As exiles who left the public schools without graduating, their critical perspectives deserve consideration.

Definition of Terms

Dropouts-persons who withdrew or were expelled from high school without earning a high school diploma.

GED - General Educational Development test, high school equivalency diploma.

ABE - Adult Basic Education, programs of functional academics for functionally illiterate adults.

Subjects - fifty (50) adult students enrolled in Adult Basic Education and GED preparation classes in Lycoming and Tioga Counties, Pennsylvania.

Basic Assumptions

Researcher (R) assumes that the information reported by subjects (Ss) is true and accurate. R assumes that information contained in the 16th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools is true and accurate.

Limitations

Questions as stated in the Gallup Poll have an approximate Fry readability level of seventh (7th) grade. Many of the Ss had reading ability below this level. Therefore, R administered and explained the questionnaire to Ss. Inherant weaknesses in this method are 1) possible contamination of questions by R, so that a true comparison cannot be made to the Gallup Poll; 2) possible differences of interpretation of the questions on the part of the Ss, some of whom are functionally illiterate.

The Gallup sample comprised 1,515 adults from all regions of the country, including individuals with widely varying education, political, occupational and religious backgrounds. The subjects of this study were all high school dropouts residing in Pennsylvania and generally of low socioeconomic status. Caution must be exercised in drawing any conclusions by comparing this sample to the Gallup sample.

Although all students attending the ABE/GED classes participated in the study, the Ss were not a representative sample of high school dropouts because dropouts not enrolled in adult education classes did not participate.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES

The study was conducted with fifty (50) high school dropouts currently enrolled in ABE and GED classes. A twenty-five (25) question survey was distributed and its completion was supervised by R (appendix A).

R read each question to Ss and allowed time for written responses. After the entire questionnaire was presented, the Ss were given additional time to write their personal comments if desired. For those Ss who were incapable of reading the questionnaire or writing responses, R read the questionnaire individually and recorded their responses, including comments.

Objectives of the survey were (1) To collect information on the reasons students left school (2) To record attitudes of these students toward their past educational experiences; (3) To record attitudes of adult high school dropouts toward public education today.

Responses to questions that were identical in format to the Gallup questions were analyzed by simple comparison to the Gallup findings (appendix A).

In analyzing the subjects' reasons for dropping out and attitudes toward former teachers, R divided Ss into three (3) groups according to whether they gave the last public school they attended a positive (A or B), neutral (C or Don't know) or negative rating (D or F). Comments and responses to open-ended questions are listed in the appendices. Demographic data and profiles of Ss are also presented.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Table I presents a profile of the subjects who participated in this study.

TABLE I

PROFILE OF SUBJECTS

Age:	**Range:**	57 years, from 17 to 73.
	Median:	22
	Mode:	17
	Mean:	27.4
Sex:	Male, n-20; Female, n-30.	
Age of subject when (s)he quit school:		
	Range:	6 years, from age 13 to age 18.
	Mode:	17 (44%)
	Mean:	16.480
Grade subject was enrolled in at time of withdrawal:		
	Range:	6 grades, from 7 through 12
	Mode:	11th grade (36%)
	Mean:	10.208

Table I shows that 44% of the subjects in this study dropped out at the age of 17, and 36% dropped out during the 11th grade. There were twenty (20) male and thirty (30) female subjects ranging in age from 17 to 73 years of age.

Figure I compares the opinions of dropouts and Gallup Poll respondents on the subject of how hard schoolchildren are made to work in school and on homework.

FIGURE I

Are elementary schoolchildren made to work too hard in school and on homework or not hard enough?

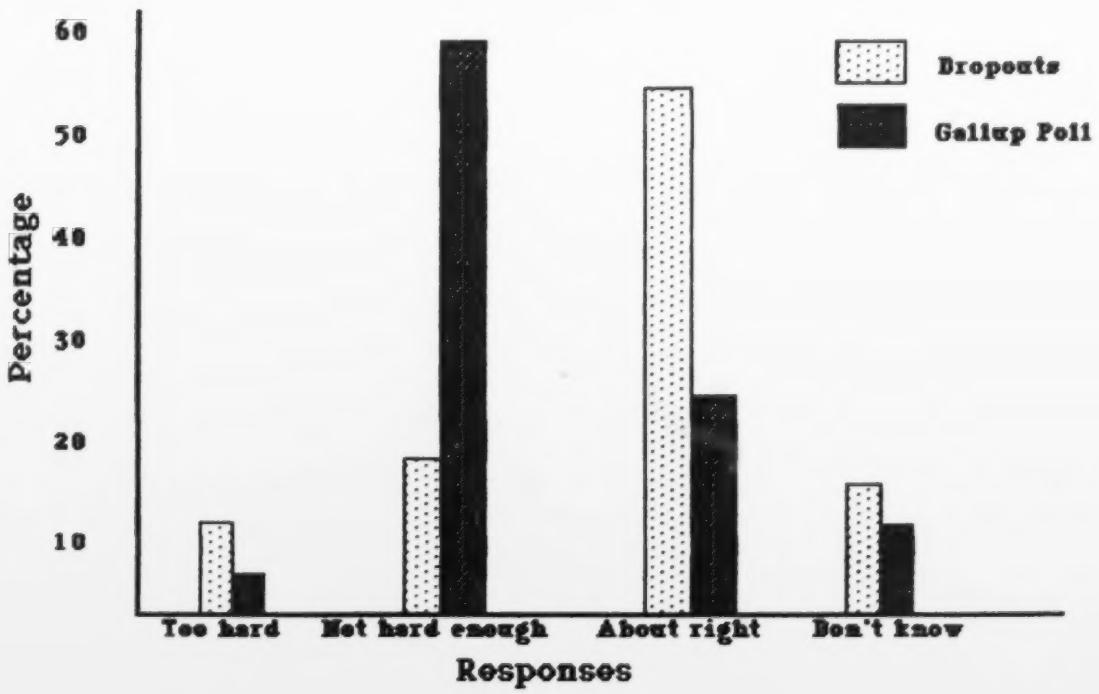

Figure I shows that 59% of the respondents to the Gallup Poll felt that schoolchildren are not made to work hard enough as compared to 18% of the dropouts, while 54% of the dropouts felt that schoolchildren work about the right amount (compared to 24% of the Gallup respondents).

Figure II shows the grades given by Gallup respondents and dropouts to their local school boards.

Figure II
What grade would you give the school board in this community?

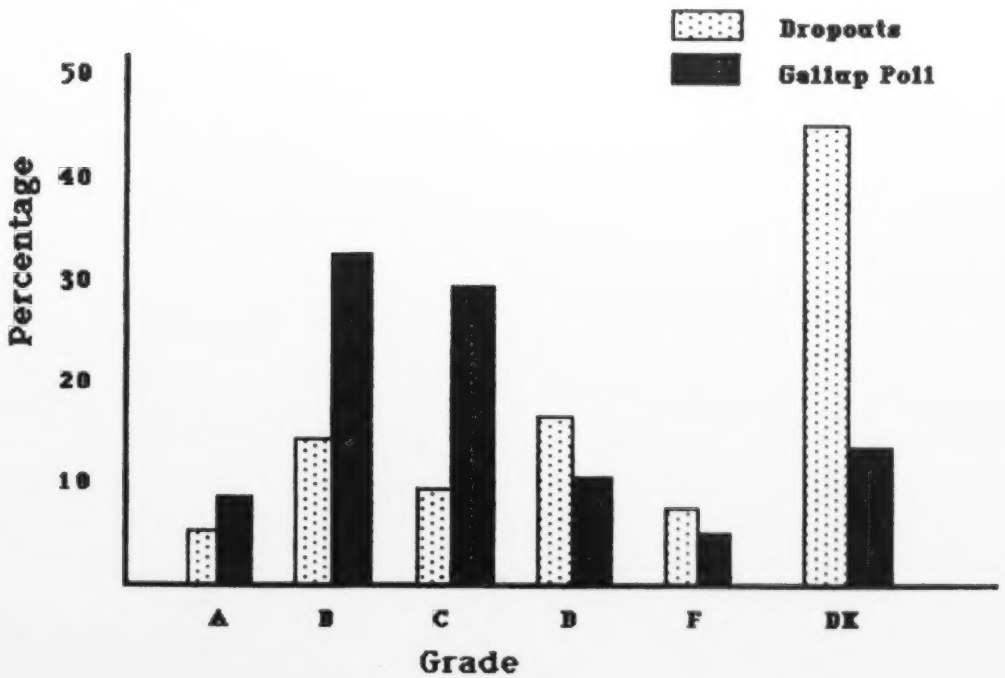

Figure II shows that 9% of Gallup respondents gave their school boards an A, and 32% a B, as compared to 6% and 14% respectively for the dropout population. On the other hand, 46% of the dropouts said that they didn't know what grade to give the school board, as compared to 13% of Gallup respondents.

Figure III shows the grades dropouts gave the last school they attended before dropping out, and grades given to local public schools, as well as the public's grades to local public schools.

FIGURE III
GRADES GIVEN LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED AND SCHOOLS IN THIS COMMUNITY

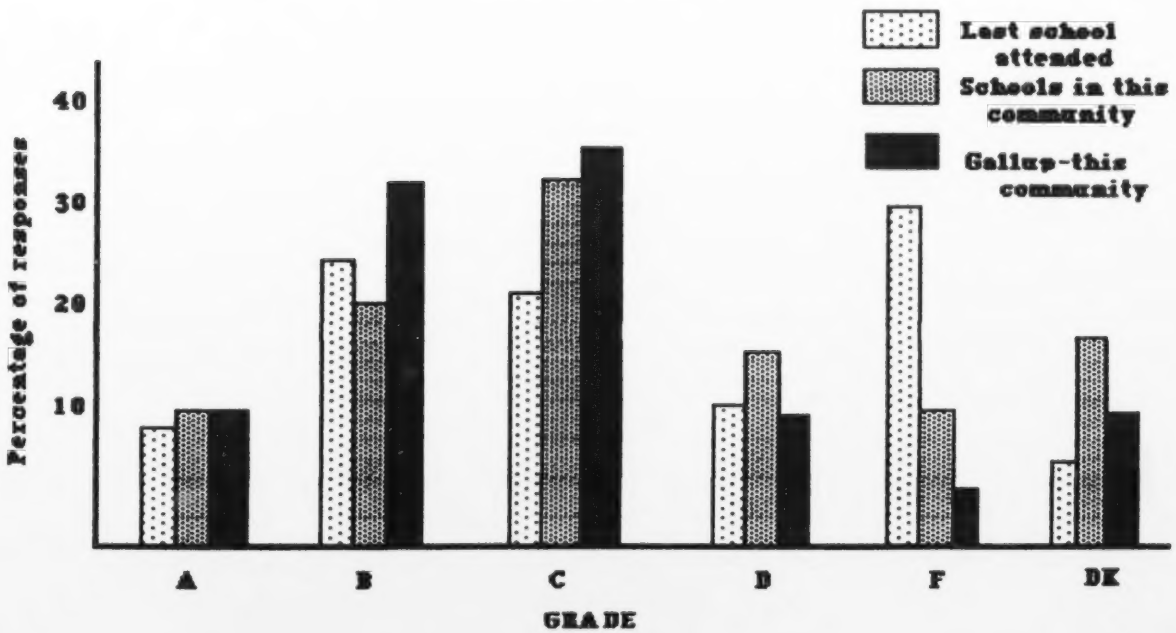

Figure III shows that dropouts had more negative feelings toward the last school they attended (D,12%; F,28%) than did Gallup Poll respondents toward local schools (D,11%; F,4%). While the public gave local schools 10% A's and 32% B's, the dropouts rated their last school attended with 8% A's and 24% B's.

Table II shows how subjects described their high school teachers; subjects are grouped according to the grade they gave the last school they attended.

TABLE II
HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TEACHERS?
Check all answers that apply:

Grade given last school attended:	N-16 A or B	N-14 C or DK	N-20 D or F
	%	%	%
Were kind and interested in kids	44	15	14
Were willing to help me with problems	56	36	21
Cared about me as a person	25	21	30
Offered clear explanations in class	31	29	25
Treated me like an adult	31	14	20
Were friendly toward me	56	36	35
Treated me just like any other student	50	43	30
Mean % favorable descriptions	41.857	27.715	25.0
Didn't care about me as a person	0	07	50
Couldn't explain thing so I could understand	06	43	45
Wouldn't help me with problems	06	21	30
Embarrassed or criticized me	0	29	20
Were unfair in marking or grading	13	07	15
Didn't like or understand kids	0	07	10
Mean % unfavorable descriptions	4.167	19.0	28.333
Don't know	06	0	0

Table II shows that of the subjects who graded the last school they attended "A" or "B", 56% felt that teachers were willing to help them with problems and were friendly toward them, 50% felt that teachers treated them just like any other student, and 44% felt that teachers were kind and interested in kids. 31% felt that teachers offered clear explanations in class and treated them like an adult. There were no notable negative descriptions for this group.

Subjects who graded their last school with a" C" or "Don't Know" generally

rated their former teachers favorably, with 43% saying that teachers treated them just like any other student, and 36% stating that teachers were willing to help them with problems and were friendly toward them. Although 29% of this group felt that teachers offered clear explanations in class, 43% said that teachers couldn't explain things so that they could understand.

Subjects who rated their last school experience negatively (D or F) did describe teachers as being friendly toward them (35%), but 50% of this group felt that teachers didn't care about them as a person and 45% that teachers couldn't explain things so that they could understand.

Table III shows the reasons subjects (grouped according to the rating they gave the last school they attended) dropped out of school.

TABLE III
WHY DID YOU DROP OUT OF SCHOOL?
Check all answers that apply:

Grade given last school attended:	N-16 A or B	N-14 C or DK	N-20 D or F
	%	%	%
I was expelled or suspended	0	7	10
Had poor grades	13	36	50
Bored with courses	13	36	20
Couldn't keep up with my schoolwork	06	29	30
Problems reading and writing	06	14	20
Held back for one or more grades	13	14	25
School was not for me	13	43	20
Teachers didn't help me with my schoolwork	06	14	25
Couldn't get along with teachers	0	29	25
Married or planned to get married	13	14	15
Was pregnant	13	07	05
Had to support family	19	0	0
Had to take care of someone	0	0	10
Couldn't get along with other students	19	07	20
Other students harassed me	13	14	20
Illness or disability	06	0	10
Wanted to work full time	38	43	15
Other (Appendix B)	38	29	35

Table III shows that 50% of the subjects who graded their last school D or F, listed poor grades as a reason for withdrawal; 30% mentioned difficulty in keeping up with schoolwork25% had been held back for one or more grades, couldn't get along with teachers and felt that teachers didn't help them with schoolwork.

Of those who graded their last school "C" or "Don't Know", 36% were bored with courses and had poor grades. 43% of this group felt that school was not for them and wanted to work full time; 29% couldn't keep up with schoolwork.

38% of the subjects rating the last school they attended "A" or "B" listed "wanted to work full time;" there were no other major reasons listed by this group for dropping out.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to examine the school-related factors influencing high school dropouts' decisions to drop out of school and their attitudes toward public education.

Analysis of the data revealed that students who have negative feelings toward school tend to drop out for school-related reasons and to have problems with academic success/failure and relationships with teachers and peers. Students with neutral attitudes toward school also tend to drop out because of school-related reasons, primarily because of boredom and difficulty keeping up with schoolwork. Students with positive attitudes toward school and teachers are least apt to withdraw for school-related reasons.

Therefore, it is concluded that school-related factors do influence students' decisions whether or not to drop out of school, especially for those students who have negative or neutral feelings about school. This conclusion supports the findings of previous studies.

More than three and a half times as many dropouts as Gallup Poll respondents didn't know how they would rate the school board in their community. In addition, the majority of dropouts felt that schoolchildren have about the right amount of work in school and for homework, while the majority of Gallup Poll respondents did not feel that today's elementary schoolchildren are made to work hard enough.

Discussion

The decision to divide the subjects into three groups, according to the grades they gave the last school they attended, was an arbitrary one on the

part of the researcher. The data resulting from these ratings, as shown in Figure III, indicated that the dropout population had strong positive and negative feelings about their last educational experiences, and R felt that these attitudes might be directly related to their reasons for dropping out and feelings toward teachers. A similar approach might have been to break the subjects into groups according to the way they felt about school before dropping out (question #12).

The Gallup data and Gallup-related questions, while interesting, were not as useful to the project as were the students' perceptions of their own educational experiences.

In addressing the assumptions and limitations of this project, the reactive measurement effect is one that must be recognized as a possible source of invalidity. The subjects seemed to be very pleased to participate and to be asked their opinions about education. It is possible that they chose the role of "critic" of the educational system and saw a chance to "get even" in their responses when in fact, they might not have really felt so strongly about their past experiences.

On the other hand,as the population studied only represented those students who had returned to adult education classes, it is possible that their responses might have been more positive than would those of a population that included dropouts who did not seek further education. However, respondents might also have been reluctant to discuss the negative aspects of their school experiences and may have refrained from answering with any alternatives that would place them in a "bad light."

There is also a possibility that the research instrument changed slightly as the researcher gained more practice in explaining the questions.

Recommendations

It is recommended that further research be conducted to investigate the relationship between a student's attitudes and feelings about school and reasons for dropping out. Future studies might place more emphasis on dropouts' assessment of the school climate. Teachers' attitudes toward potential dropouts is another area that warrants investigation.

Further research on this subject should utilize a larger population, including dropouts who did not seek continuing education. The presentation of a future survey or questionnaire could be more carefully controlled by limiting discussion to predetermined explanatory statements.

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Mark the one answer that is the best:		n-50 %	Gallup %
1 Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here - A,B,C,D, or FAIL?	A	10	10
	B	20	32
	C	32	35
	D	14	11
	FAIL	8	4
	Don't know	16	8
Comments:			
2 How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally - A,B,C,D, or FAIL?	A	6	2
	B	28	23
	C	38	49
	D	6	11
	FAIL	2	4
Comments:	Don't know	20	11
3 Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in this community?	A	10	13
	B	22	37
	C	28	31
	D	12	7
	FAIL	12	3
Comments:	Don't know	16	9
4 Now, what rating would you give the principals and administrators in this community.	A	10	13
	B	32	34
	C	14	29
	D	10	8
	FAIL	14	5
Comments:	Don't know	20	11
5 Now, what grade would you give the school board in this community?	A	6	9
	B	14	32
	C	10	29
	D	16	11
	FAIL	8	6
Comments:	Don't know	46	13

			%	Gallup
6	Now, what grade would you give the parents of students in the local public schools for bringing up their children?	A	4	7
		B	26	26
		C	34	36
		D	4	16
		FAIL	4	6
	Comments:	Don't know	28	9
7	What grade would you give the last school you attended before dropping out of school?	A	8	
		B	24	
		C	11	
		D	12	
		FAIL	28	
	Comments:	Don't know	6	
8	Now, what grade would you give the teachers you had before you dropped out.	A	20	
		B	24	
		C	16	
		D	20	
		FAIL	16	
	Comments:	Don't know	4	
9	Now, what grade would you give the principals and administrators you had then?	A	14	
		B	20	
		C	12	
		D	18	
		FAIL	20	
	Comments:	Don't know	16	
10	In general, do you think elementary schoolchildren in the public schools here are made to work too hard in school and on homework or not hard enough?	Too hard	12	5
		Not hard enough	18	59
		About right amount	54	24
		Don't know	16	12
	Comments:			

		%
11 In general, do you think that you were made to work too hard in school and on homework or not hard enough?	Too hard	22
	Not hard enough	36
	About right amount	36
	Don't know	6

Comments:

12 How did you feel about school before you dropped out?	Enjoyed it	16
	Tolerated it	30
	Felt uncomfortable	28
	Hated it	24
Comments:	Don't know	2

13 How difficult were the courses you took in school?	Too hard	16
	Too easy	6
	About right	74
	Don't know	4

Comments:

14 Do you feel that the things you learned in school helped you in later life?

Yes, most courses were useful	18
No, most courses were a waste of time	14
Some courses helped me; some didn't	62
Don't know	6

Comments:

15 How did you get along with your teachers?	Pretty well	38
	So-so; okay	52
	Badly	10
Comments:	Dont know	0

Check all answers that apply:

16 How would you describe your high school teachers? %

Most of them:

were kind and interested in kids	24
were willing to help me with problems	36
cared about me as a person	26
offered clear explanations in class	26
treated me like an adult	24
were friendly toward me	40
treated me just like any other student	40
didn't care about me as a person	22
couldn't explain things so that I could understand	32
wouldn't help me with problems	20
embarrassed or criticized me	16
were unfair in marking and grading	12
didn't like or understand kids	6
don't know	2

17 Why did you drop out of school?

I was expelled or suspended	6
Had poor grades	34
Bored with courses	20
Couldn't keep up with my schoolwork	22
Problems reading and writing	14
Held back for one or more grades	16
School was not for me	20
Teachers didn't help me with my schoolwork	16
Couldn't get along with teachers	18
Married or planned to get married	14
Was pregnant	10
Had to support family	4
Had to take care of someone	4
Couldn't get along with other students	16
Other students harassed me	14
Illness or disability	6
Wanted to work full time	30
Other (please list with comments, below)	36

Comments:

18 Did you have any special needs when you were in high school? Please explain:

19 In what ways did the schools meet your personal needs?

20 In what ways did the schools not meet your needs?

21 If you could change today's schools so that they are better now than they were for you, what would be different?

Personal information

22 Age: Range of 57 years, from 17 to 73; median,22; mode,17; mean,27.4.

23 Sex: Male n-20 Female n-30

24 How old were you when you quit school? Range of 6 years, from age 13 to age 18; mode,17 (44%); mean, 16.480.

25 What grade were you in when you quit? (If you quit during a summer vacation, what was the last grade you finished?) Range of 6 grades, from 7 through 12; 11th grade was the mode (36%); mean grade level, 10.208.

Additional comments:

APPENDIX B

Comments

1 Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here - A,B,C,D or FAIL?

Grade, "B:"

Teachers, I feel are too lax on drugs going into schools and I feel they should get tougher.

One bad mark: School district doesn't have people who understand dyslexics or reading problems.

Grade, "C:"

Between C and B.

Grade, "D:"

The teachers were unfair. Didn't give students chance.

I think the curriculum should be geared more toward the students' career plans and goals. The students should have at least 75% of all input into what courses to take to help them in their life and ideals and hopes.

Grade, "Don't know:"

I wouldn't dare give an answer. There are so many of them (schools).

Schools are unfair.

Just moved here.

2 How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally - A,B,C,D or FAIL?

Grade, "B:"

Private and Public schools, B; Parochial, A.

I don't go there, so don't know.

Grade, "F:"

Some schools are more or less advanced and it's not fair when you move if you're behind or ahead.

Grade, "Don't know:"

I hope other high schools are better than the one I went to.

3 Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in this community?

Grade, "A:"

Most I've met through my kids are very good teachers.

Grade, "B:"

Some are A, and some C.

Grade, "C:"

There are many bad teachers (have bad teaching qualities), and very few good ones.

Need more one on one individual help. Need more effective teaching.

Because I feel some of the teachers don't help the students as much as they should.

Nice ones and mean ones.

Half and half - some are good, some are bad.

Some of the teachers give them a D or B. Most of them a C.

Grade, "D:"

Most of them don't give everyone the same treatment because they have to pick out favorites.

Grade, "F:"

The teachers tried with all their might, but I feel they could of (and should do) done better.

Most teachers are just in it for the money. They have no feelings or consideration for the students.

Teachers are not dedicated, will not stay and give extra help; show favoritism.

4 Now, what rating would you give the principals and administrators in this community?

Grade, "A:"

They do a good job.

Grade, "B:"

Some good, Some not. (Principal wouldn't permit child to use phone in an emergency; didn't consider bus accident and upset child an emergency).

Parents really don't have too much to say as to why curriculums change.

Grade, "Don't know:"

I feel that they tried, but I also feel that if the system was changed, they would do better.

Grade, "F:"

The principal in (. . .) High School had favorites. He would only punish (with) certain sentences.

Most principals are just in it for the money. They have no consideration for the students.

5 Now, what grade would you give the school board in this community?

Grade, "F:"

They built flat roofs on new schools; roofs leak. Doing a pretty good job otherwise.

6 Now, what grade would you give the parents of students in the local public schools for bringing up their children?

Grade, "C:"

Because some parents just don't care.

Some of them a F or D.

Many are apathetic.

It would depend on the parents.

Grade, "F:"

Too many kids are into drugs and so forth. By the way, I'm 17. I think our generation should improve with parents' help.

"Don't know:"

It's very hard to say; some are not good parents, some are.

I really can't answer that one, because they all have their own method of raising their children.

I really can't say anything because it is really not my place to tell others how to raise their children.

Some good, some bad.

Some F; some C or B.

7 What grade would you give the last school you attended before dropping out of school?

Grade "B:"

The school was a A, but including the kids with the school they get a B, or lower.

Dropped out in 1926.

Grade, "D:"

I was pushed through all schools.

Grade, "F:"

The teachers were terrible. The courses were conducted awfully.

I was the only white girl in my class; I could have been put in other classes.

The school was almost oblivious to some problems the kids had and punished them (usually emotionally) without really understanding why the kid had problems.

"Don't Know:"

Because some of the teachers didn't care if they help the one that needed help (A - C).

Good until the last year.

8 Now, what grade would you give the teachers you had before you dropped out?

Grade "A:"

I was sent for counseling. They did care.

Good dedicated teachers, but prejudiced.

Grade, "B:"

Some A, some C.

Teachers unfair to students, took off lavatory doors.

Most were good, but some were bad.

Grade, "C:"

Most of the teachers I had didn't seem to like their job. And they took it out on the kids.

I liked one teacher. She could explain things so I could understand and took more time with students.

Some were really great, but others, well . . .

Grade, "F:"

Some teachers weren't too bad.

They don't care. They didn't help you if you had a problem.

"Don't Know:"

Same as #7: A - C; because some of the teachers didn't care if they help the one that needed help.

9 Now, what grade would you give the principals and administrators you had then?

Grade, "B:"

Afraid of black students.

Grade, "C:"

The principals were o.k. They sat down and discussed your problems.

Grade, "F:"

Didn't get along with the principal at all.

Unfair - took things too far. If a student got detention, principal used paddle.

10 In general, do you think elementary schoolchildren in the public schools here are made to work too hard in school and on homework or not hard enough?

"Not hard enough:"

They hardly bring homework home.

The only exception is a girl in 1st grade was already getting into division and multiplication and had a lot of homework.

Don't know:"

Sometimes too hard and sometimes not hard enough.

They shouldn't have so much homework. Teachers should teach in school. Students should work harder in school.

11 In general, do you think that <u>you</u> were made to work too hard in school and on homework or not enough?

"Too hard:"

Everyone had to be on the same level. A lot weren't and didn't speak up. That's the reason for cheating - just trying to get by.

I think school is o.k. School is to work and I can get along with that, but homework is not necessary.

Some subjects.

"Not hard enough:"

I was slow so the teachers would shy away from me.

"About right amount:"

I worked harder than usual because I wanted to, up until 10th grade.

"Don't Know:"

The stuff I did do which wasn't really important was hard. The stuff that was important wasn't hard enough.

Sometimes too hard and sometimes not hard enough.

12 How did you feel about school before you dropped out?

"Enjoyed it:"

School wasn't my favorite thing, but it was all right.

It was o.k. because of my friends, but I never learned anything.

Until junior high (racial situation)

"Felt uncomfortable:"

We were a poor family and didn't have clothes or money to continue.

Mostly with the other classmates I was uncomfortable.

"Hated it:"

It didn't suit me personally.

The teachers, the students especially, and the courses weren't to the standard I was used to. They conducted their classes very badly.

13 How difficult were the courses you took in school?

"Too easy:"

You can pick your own courses and I usually chose "General."

I learned the same thing every year.

"About right:"

It all depended on what teacher I got. Some courses were easy, but the teacher made it rough.

I took some honors courses.

"Don't Know:"

Some were too easy, some too hard. Uneven.

Some were hard.

14 Do you feel that the things you learned in school helped you in later life?

"Yes, most courses were helpful:"

Learned respect of others, of property, etc. Courses were not helpful in subject areas.

"No, most courses were a waste of time:"

Nothing I learned in school will help me a lot, unless someone asks me to solve an algebra problem.

15 How did you get along with your teachers?

"Pretty well:"

I got along with the teachers in my other school fine. (. . .) teachers acted like they didn't care.

"So-so; okay:"

The teachers that helped me, listened to my problems and discussed them with me were cool.

Some were ok, but most of them showed too much favoritism.

Got along great with some; despised others!

"Badly:"

Got along with three.

APPENDIX C

17 Why did you drop out of school? **Other**

Put child up for adoption, I had trouble handling it.

Didn't have enough credits to graduate and didn't feel like going another whole year for 2 elective classes, which I'm sure I'd never use later in life. Plus, I hated the high school.

I didn't have enough credits to graduate.

Was injured then moved out of the school district and decided to take GED courses.

Family problem

Wanted to party.

I didn't really learn anything.

I wanted to breastfeed my baby and raise her myself, not give her to someone else to raise.

School really didn't help me with my career. It stifled me.

They were going to kick me out because they said I wasn't doing anything in class, but I was just slow!! So I dropped out.

Teachers gave me a rough time about missing so much but couldn't understand it is hard to find a babysitter you can trust, and I went through five my senior year.

I got in a fight with the principal, so I quit.

The teachers were always upset when I missed a lot of school because of illness and didn't understand my problem.

Dropped out of the new school because of the courses, the teachers, the students, all in general. Would have never dropped out of the school I attended before.

Left to go to N.Y.C. with off Broadway play. Ended up touring with the play.

Administrative mixup: Someone withdrew me from school. Had a hard time trying to get back in, so just gave up and joined the Army.

Got kicked out of the house. Instead of going to school, got a job.

Didn't like the way the system was run. Everyone had to be on the same level. A lot weren't and didn't speak up. That's the reason for cheating, just trying to get by.

Wasn't interested.

Found out married teachers were running around. They didn't like it.

Missed too many days of school. Principals told me don't bother about coming back because your grades were low.

APPENDIX D

18 Did you have any special needs when you were in high school? Please explain:

Could not read or write.
Needed help with reading. More help in reading than anything, some in math.
Dyslexic, schools didn't understand it as they do today.
Needed art classes or theatrical, dance, etc. more like school of the arts. A lot of talented people in my school, but not much was offered.
Needed more excitement.
Math, fractions, etc.
Eighth grade, I had behavior problems.
Needed help with reading.
Needed help on classwork. I have a medical problem and miss a lot of school, and the teachers wouldn't send my work home.
When I moved to ... from another school I couldn't use a manual typewriter and I told them so. I had only used electric and they made me use the manual and I started getting bad grades and in record keeping didn't finish the course in my other school and they gave me credits for it.
Just need help with school work.
Had to have help with everything.
Reading class.
Need help in math and social studies.
The only special needs were that the teachers would not take things too fast.
I needed confidence in myself. I couldn't stand up for myself with teachers I disagreed with.
Needed responsibility, understanding, how to get into the job market I wanted.
I needed more time to do my work.
Financial help for my Mom.
Trouble with math and history.
I needed help in spelling and I didn't get it.
I needed two parents and more income in order to have clothes that would suit other kids.
Had a bad home life.

APPENDIX E

19 In what ways did the schools meet your special needs?

Some of the teachers were good and some weren't.
One teacher tried to meet my needs.
Don't know.
It didn't!
They didn't (2).
None.
Did offer the courses I needed for my career goal. The one school I went to was fine.
They really didn't help me a whole lot in (.....school) but (another school) helped me a lot. They understand my illness.
Got to meet new people, be with friends.
Liked being around people and gym.
The secretarial courses.
I was too slow in my thinking so the guidance teacher said I should quit school and get a trade.
It was able to give me the classes with hands-on experience with a trade I really liked.
Some teachers would take their time, but other teachers just wanted to get finished with the rest of the book.
It was a big help mentally.
No comment.
Good in some things.

APPENDIX F

20 In what ways did the schools <u>not</u> meet your needs?

They treated students like they were just a number.
No patience in helping to understand.
Some of the teachers wouldn't help me.
Help in study.
They put me in a different grade in the middle of the year because of my age; I was moved ahead, but wasn't ready to move ahead.
Don't know.
It was a hassle. We had to get up too early in the morning just to get hassled. I could understand if we got paid for it.
Help if you had a problem.
In reading.
They didn't help me.
I found my school very unsatisfactory. The other students attitude - some of the teachers. Most of their courses weren't up to my standards as my other school was.
Reading and arithmetic basic problems. I taught myself by reading comic books and fiction ("Little Women")
I think I was a kid who required special attention in my weak areas. I didn't get that.
Too many teachers paid more attention to kids that were in sports and other activities; if you weren't you were just there.
Didn't offer the right courses.
Offer more interesting classes besides just the basics.
The general education.
They did not try to keep me going all through the grades like I should have.
All needs were fulfilled.
Did not prepare me for married life and parenting, which is what I did.
No comment.
Not sure.

APPENDIX G

21 If you could change today's schools so that they are better now than they were for you, what would be different?

Not so many in a class. Teachers work more with the kids. Some are just there for a paycheck.

Better education programs.

Students would be treated like individuals.

Teachers should make sure that all the students understand what they're teaching.

Longer lunch hour.

Put lavatory doors back on. Be more fair and considerate of students; put them on the same level with teachers. School should take more interest in talented students.

Better attitude of some teachers to students and their sisters and brothers.

Don't know (2)

Replace most of the teachers. A lot of them just didn't care about their students. One in particular; during class he only talked on the phone and had girls do errands for him for basketball.

Make sure kids know how to do all kinds of math. Make sure they know about the world they live in.

Better teachers.

Schools are better now.

I would start school at 10:00 a.m. and give slow student more time.

The teachers, principals--get someone who would care.

Shorter days and better teacher that would help you understand work.

Would want them to help the kids better than they do.

Smaller classes for more individual help, if really needed. Ask opinions of the students.

Replace some of the teachers to someone who would help you with your homework and will send your work home when you were sick. Also, when you would miss a lot of school because of your health. Don't keep riding you all the time about your grades and the school you have missed.

Everyone would be treated as one person. Would work with students individually and not as a class. Take out unnecessary classes, put in more basics-English, Math. Better lunches.

Teach every kid to swim.

I don't think kids should be pushed so hard. Each student is different, some kids do require attention in their weak areas.

Would help everybody spelling, reading, writing and everything else they needed help with.

Make all the teachers treat and teach the kids the same and not have any favorites.

After 9th grade, students should take survey to see what they plan to do in life and their school should center around that.

Offer more subjects-more interesting field trips. Have some teachers get more involved in their classes than just writing on a blackboard giving assignments.

Make sure teachers took the time to explain things even if they weren't asked to.

I would make sure all of the teachers and principals took a few courses in psychology, so they could understand how difficult it is for teenagers to grow up nowadays.

Tell the students how good they are doing and help them, even if their grades are bad or good. Encourage them to stay in school by all means.

Punishment for misbehavior in my school - it wasn't severe enough to discourage the students.

I'd find an alternative to suspending students for doing something wrong because most kids try to get suspended out of school just so they can get out of going to school!

I think they are expecting too much of the younger generation. It seems like they're pushing too much on them too fast.

Concentrate less on history courses and more on updated courses and technology aimed toward giving the students an advance on college and the changing job market.

The classes would not be real large so the teachers could give extra help to students that need it.

Everyone would be treated equally and teachers wouldn't have favorites.

I really don't see to be any changes. I think the schools are more liberal than they were when I went to school. I think schools today are not as strict as when I went.

I think this school is better.

My school was very good - I would like to see drugs out of kids' hands.

No comment.

Now these children have computers. They need challenging work now. Teachers should encourage the children.

No changes.

Not so much leisure. Going outside in winter, coming back to class from the cold, students get drowsy.

Teachers help students more. Nice teachers.

Not sure.